Still I Rise

You may write me down in history

With your bitter, twisted lies,

You may trod me in the very dirt

But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Does my sassiness upset you?

Why are you beset with gloom?

'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells

Pumping in my living room.

Just like moons and like suns,

With the certainty of tides,

Just like hopes springing high,

Still I'll rise.

Did you want to see me broken?

Bowed head and lowered eyes?

Shoulders falling down like teardrops.

Weakened by my soulful cries.

Does my haughtiness offend you?

Don't you take it awful hard

'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines

Diggin' in my own back yard.

You may shoot me with your words,

You may cut me with your eyes,

You may kill me with your hatefulness,

But still, like air, I'll rise.

Does my sexiness upset you?

Does it come as a surprise

That I dance like I've got diamonds

At the meeting of my thighs?

Out of the huts of history's shame

I rise

Up from a past that's rooted in pain

I rise

I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,

Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.

Leaving behind nights of terror and fear

I rise

Into a daybreak that's wondrously clear

I rise

Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,

I am the dream and the hope of the slave.

I rise

I rise

I rise.

Maya Angelou

Questions to ask yourself while you read.

1. First, look for overall structural patterns and stanza configuration.
2. Look closely at each stanza. Are there metaphors, similes, meter, rhyme, imagery, etc.?
3. Why is the phrase “I’ll rise” repeated? Does it mean the same thing each time?
4. How do the specific words help to develop themes or meaning?
5. Why is the last line repeated three times?
6. From the words of the poem alone what message does the poem seem to make?

*\* Questions adapted from Lisa Schade Eckert’s Book How Does It Mean?*